



Ahimsā

Newsletter of the Charleston Buddhist Fellowship

March 2005 (2549)

The Pali Canon

Tipiṭaka

The Buddha has passed away, but the sublime Teaching, which He expounded during His long and successful ministry and which He unreservedly bequeathed to humanity, still exists in its pristine purity.

Although the Master left no written records of His Teachings, His faithful disciples preserved them by committing them to memory and transmitting them orally from generation to generation.

Three months after the death of the Buddha, in the eighth year of King Ajātasattu's reign, five hundred pre-eminent Arahants, concerned with preserving the purity of the doctrine, held a Convocation in Rājagaha to recite it. Venerable Ānanda Thera, the Buddha's beloved attendant, who had the special privilege and honor of hearing the discourses from the Buddha Himself, and Venerable Upāli Thera, who was the most knowledgeable about the Disciplinary Rules, were chosen to answer questions about the Dhamma and the Vinaya respectively.

The First Council compiled and arranged the Teachings and the Disciplinary Rules in their present form, which are preserved intact in the Pali Tipiṭaka. The Tipiṭaka represents the entire body of the Buddha's Teaching.

Two other Councils of Arahants were held 100 years and 236 years later respectively, again to recite the Word of the Buddha, because attempts were being made to pollute the pure Teaching.

About 83 B.C.E., during the reign of the pious Śri Lankan King Vaṭṭa Gāmani Abhaya, a Council of Arahants was held, and the Tipiṭaka was, for the first time in the history of Buddhism, committed to writing at Aluvihāra in Śri Lanka (Ceylon).

Thanks to the indefatigable efforts of those foresighted Arahants, there is no room either now or in the future for any group or individual to adulterate the pure Teachings of the Buddha.

Vinaya Piṭaka

The Vinaya Piṭaka, which is regarded as the sheet anchor of the Holy Order, deals mainly with the rules and regulations of the Order of Bhikkhus (*monks*) and Bhikkhunīs (*nuns*). For nearly twenty years after the Enlightenment of the Buddha, no definite rules were laid down for the control and discipline of the Sangha (*Holy Order*).

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Activities

The Charleston Buddhist Fellowship:

- Conducts informal seminars on Buddhism.
- Prepares and distributes free educational material.

Programs

The Charleston Buddhist Fellowship sponsors the following programs:

- Instructions in meditation.
- Dhamma study groups.
- Retreats (at IMC-USA).

There are no fees for any of the activities or programs offered by the organization. Seminars are designed to present basic information about Buddhism to the general public — anyone may attend. However, study groups and meditation instructions are open to members only.

Retreats last ten days and are coordinated through IMC-USA in Westminster, MD (410-346-7889). Fees are set by IMC-USA. Advance registration is required.

One-on-one discussions about one's individual practice or about Buddhism in general are also available upon request. These discussions are accorded confidential treatment. There is no fee for one-on-one discussions. ■

Dhamma Study Group

An on-going Dhamma study group focusing on the basic teachings of the Buddha meets Sunday mornings at 11:00 o'clock at the home of Allan Bomhard. Call Allan at (843) 720-8531 for directions to his home. There is no fee to participate in this group. ■

Theravādin Buddhism

Theravādin Buddhism is the school that comes closest to the original form of Buddhism. The Theravādin scriptures, composed in the Pali language, come directly from the mouth of the Buddha.

“Theravāda” means “Doctrine of the Elders.” According to tradition, the name is derived from the fact that the doctrine was fixed by 500 Elders of the Holy Order soon after the death of the Buddha.

The Theravādin tradition is the only one of the old schools of Buddhism to have survived among those that are designated “Hīnayāna” by the Mahāyāna. It is sometimes also called “Southern Buddhism” or “Pali Buddhism.”

The teachings of the Theravādin school consist essentially of the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, the doctrine of Conditioned Arising, and the doctrine of No Self or No Soul.

The emphasis in the Theravādin tradition is on the liberation of the individual, which takes place through one's own efforts (in meditation) and through observation of the rules of moral discipline.

Theravādin Buddhism is the dominant religion in the countries of Southeast Asia — Śri Lanka (Ceylon), Thailand, Myanmar (Burma), Laos, and Cambodia.

The Buddha's Teachings are the greatest heritage mankind has received from the past. The Buddha's message of nonviolence and peace, of love and compassion, of tolerance and understanding, of truth and wisdom, of respect and regard for all life, of freedom from selfishness, hatred, and violence, delivered over two thousand five hundred years ago, stands good for today and will stand forever as the Truth. It is an eternal message. ■

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Subsequently, as occasion arose, the Buddha promulgated rules for the discipline of the Sangha. The reasons for the promulgation of rules, their various implications, and specific Vinaya ceremonies of the Sangha are fully described in the Vinaya Piṭaka. The history of the development of the Sāsana from its very inception, a brief account of the life and ministry of the Buddha, and details of the first three Councils are some of the other material contained in the Vinaya Piṭaka. Indirectly, the Vinaya Piṭaka reveals useful information about ancient Indian history, customs, arts, and sciences. One who reads the Vinaya Piṭaka cannot but be impressed by the democratic constitution of the Sangha, their holding of possessions in common, the exceptionally high moral standard of the Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunīs, and the unsurpassed administrative abilities of the Buddha.

The Vinaya Piṭaka has three major divisions: (1) Vibhanga, (2) Khandhaka, and (3) Parivāra. The Vibhanga is further divided into two parts: (1) Pārājikā and (2) Pācittiya. Likewise, the Khandhaka consists of two parts: (1) Mahāvagga and (2) Cullavagga (or Cūlavagga). The Parivāra is a later addition — it summarizes the whole of the Vinaya.

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|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Pārājikā (Major Offenses) | } Vibhanga |
| 2. Pācittiya (Minor Offenses) | |
| 3. Mahāvagga (Greater Section) | } Khandhaka |
| 4. Cullavagga (Lesser Section) | |
| 5. Parivāra (Epitome of the Vinaya) | |

The Vibhanga enumerates the 227 disciplinary rules for Bhikkhus. These rules are arranged into eight categories:

1. Four rules leading to expulsion from the Order if broken (*pārājikā*):

- a. Sexual intercourse;
- b. Theft;
- c. Taking a human life or inducing another to commit suicide;
- d. Falsely boasting of supernormal powers.

2. Thirteen rules dealing with initial and subsequent meetings of the Sangha (*sanghādisesā*);
3. Two indefinite rules (*aniyatā*);
4. Thirty rules dealing with expiation and forfeiture (*nissaggiya pācittiya*);
5. Ninety-two rules dealing with expiation (*pācittiya*);
6. Four rules requiring confession (*pāṭidesanīyā*);
7. Seventy-five rules dealing with etiquette and decorum (*sekhiyā*);
8. Seven rules for the settlement of legal processes (*adhikaraṇasamathā*).

These rules are followed by those for Bhikkhunīs (*Bhikkhunī Vibhanga*).

The Khandhaka is divided into the Mahāvagga (Greater Section) and the Cullavagga (Lesser Section — this is also called the Cūlavagga):

I. Mahāvagga:

1. Rules for admission to the Order;
2. The Uposatha Meeting and the reciting of the Pātimokkha (Disciplinary Rules);
3. Retreat during the rainy season (*vassāna*);
4. Ceremony concluding the rainy season retreat (*pavāraṇā*);
5. Rules regarding articles of dress and furniture;
6. The procedures for the annual making and distribution of robes (*kaṭhina*);
7. Rules regarding sick Bhikkhus, sleeping, and robe material;
8. The way of conducting meetings by the Order;
9. Proceedings in case of schism.

II. Cullavagga (Cūlavagga):

1. Rules for dealing with offences that are brought before the Order;
2. Procedures for putting a Bhikkhu on probation;
3. Rules for dealing with the accumulation of offences by a Bhikkhu;
4. Rules for settling legal procedures in the Order;
5. Miscellaneous rules for bathing, dress, etc.;
6. Dwellings, furniture, lodging, etc.;
7. Schisms;
8. Different classes of Bhikkhus and the duties of teachers and novices (*sāmaṇeras*);
9. Exclusion from the Pātimokkha;
10. The ordination and instruction of Bhikkhunīs;
11. Account of the First Council at Rājagaha;
12. Account of the Second Council at Vesālī.

The last division is the Parivāra, which summarizes and classifies the Vinaya rules for instruction and examination purposes.

Sutta Piṭaka

The Sutta Piṭaka consists chiefly of instructive discourses delivered by the Buddha to both the Sangha and the laity on various occasions. A few discourses expounded by Venerable Sāriputta, Venerable Moggallāna, and Venerable Ānanda are incorporated and are accorded as much veneration as the Word of the Buddha Himself, since they were approved by Him. Most of the discourses were intended for the benefit of Bhikkhus, and they deal with the Holy Life and with the exposition of the Doctrine. There are several other discourses that deal with both the material and moral progress of lay followers. The Sigālovāda Sutta, for instance, deals mainly with the duties of a lay person. There are also a few interesting discourses

delivered to children.

The Sutta Piṭaka may be compared with a book of prescriptions, since the discourses were expounded on diverse occasions to suit the temperaments of various persons. There may be seemingly contradictory statements in some of the discourses, but they should not be misconstrued inasmuch as they were uttered by the Buddha to suit a particular purpose; for instance, when asked the same question by different people on different occasions, He would either maintain silence when the inquirer was merely foolishly inquisitive, or He would give a detailed reply when He knew that the inquirer was an earnest seeker after the Truth, and He would tailor the reply to fit the intellectual ability and spiritual awareness of the inquirer.

The Sutta Piṭaka consists of the following five Nikāyas (Collections):

1. Dīgha Nikāya (Long Discourses)
2. Majjhima Nikāya (Middle-length Discourses)
3. Saṃyutta Nikāya (Kindred Sayings)
4. Anguttara Nikāya (Gradual Sayings)
5. Khuddaka Nikāya (Smaller Collection)

The Dīgha Nikāya (Long Discourses) contains 34 suttas arranged in three sections (*vagga*). Each discourse deals, at considerable length and in great detail, with one or more than one aspect of the Teaching.

The Majjhima Nikāya (Middle-length Discourses) contains 152 suttas arranged in fifteen sections (*vagga*), roughly classified according to subject matter. Though the difference between the Majjhima Nikāya and the Dīgha Nikāya is mainly one of length, the suttas of the Majjhima Nikāya being, on the whole, shorter than those of the Dīgha Nikāya, the Majjhima Nikāya contains a much larger number of suttas and an even greater variety of content.

The Saṃyutta Nikāya (Kindred Sayings) contains 2,889 dialogues, discourses, and sayings, in prose and verse, which deal with either a

particular doctrine or a specific person. There are fifty-six groups (*saṃyutta*) divided into five sections (*vagga*).

The Anguttara Nikāya (Gradual Sayings) contains 2,308 suttas arranged numerically. There are eleven classified groups (*nipāta*), the subject of the first being single items, followed by groups of two items, and so on to the final group of eleven items.

The Khuddaka Nikāya (Smaller Collection) is subdivided into fifteen books. This Nikāya appears to have been put together gradually and contains a series of miscellaneous books, which were probably incorporated into the Canon after the other Nikāyas were closed.

1. Khuddaka Pāṭha (Shorter Texts)
2. Dhammapada (The Way of Truth)
3. Udāna (Paeans of Joy)
4. Itivuttaka (“Thus Said” Discourses)
5. Sutta Nipāta (Collected Discourses)
6. Vimāna Vatthu (Stories of Celestial Mansions)
7. Peta Vatthu (Stories of Petas)
8. Theragāthā (Psalms of the Brothers)
9. Therīgāthā (Psalms of the Sisters)
10. Jātaka (Birth Stories of the Bodhisatta)
11. Niddesa (Expositions)
12. Paṭisambhidā (Book on Analytical Knowledge)
13. Apadāna (Lives of Arahants)
14. Buddhavaṃsa (History of the Buddha)
15. Cariyā Piṭaka (Modes of Conduct)

Abhidhamma Piṭaka

The Abhidhamma Piṭaka is the most important and most interesting of the three Piṭakas, containing, as it does, the profound philosophy of the Buddha’s teaching, in contrast to the simpler discourses of the Sutta Piṭaka.

Abhidhamma, the Higher Doctrine of the Buddha, expounds the quintessence of His profound teachings.

According to some scholars, Abhidhamma was not taught by the Buddha but is a later elaboration by scholastic monks. Tradition, however, attributes the nucleus of the Abhidhamma to the Buddha Himself. The *Mātikā*, or Matrices, of the Abhidhamma, such as *Kusalā Dhammā* (Wholesome States), *Akusalā Dhammā* (Unwholesome States), *Avyākātā Dhammā* (Neutral States), etc., which have been elaborated in six of the books of the Abhidhamma (*Kathāvatthu* being excluded), were expounded by the Buddha. The honor of having expounded all of these topics in detail is assigned to Venerable Sāriputta.

Whoever the great author or authors may have been, it has to be admitted that the Abhidhamma must be the product of an intellectual genius comparable only to the Buddha. This is evident from the intricate and subtle *Paṭṭhāna Pakaraṇa*, which describes the various causal relations in detail.

To wise truth-seekers, the Abhidhamma is an indispensable guide and an intellectual treat. Here is found food for thought to original thinkers and to earnest students who wish to develop wisdom and lead an ideal Buddhist life. Abhidhamma is not a subject of fleeting interest designed for the superficial reader.

Modern Western psychology, limited as it is, comes within the scope of Abhidhamma inasmuch as it deals with mind, thoughts, thought processes, and mental properties; but the Abhidhamma does not admit the existence of a psyche or soul. It teaches a psychology without a psyche.

If one were to read the Abhidhamma as a modern textbook on psychology, one would be disappointed. No attempt has been made to solve all of the problems that confront a modern psychologist.

Consciousness (*Citta*) is defined. Thoughts are analyzed and classified chiefly from an ethical standpoint. All mental properties (*Cetasika*) are enumerated. The composition of each type of consciousness is set forth in detail. How thoughts arise is minutely described. *Bhavanga* and *Javana* thought-moments, which are explained only in the Abhidhamma and which have no parallel in modern psychology, are of special interest to those concerned with the study of the mind. Irrelevant problems, which may be of interest to students and scholars, but which have no relation to one's Deliverance, are deliberately set aside.

Matter is summarily discussed, but it has not been described for physicists. The fundamental units of matter, their material properties, the source of matter, and the relationship of mind and matter are all explained. However, Abhidhamma does not attempt to give a systematized knowledge of mind and matter. It investigates these two composite factors of the so-called "being" to help with the understanding of things as they truly are. A philosophy has been developed on those lines. Based on that philosophy, an ethical system has been evolved to realize the ultimate Goal — Nibbāna.

While the Sutta Piṭaka contains the conventional teaching (*vohāra desanā*), the Abhidhamma Piṭaka contains the ultimate teaching (*paramattha desanā*).

It is generally admitted by most exponents of the Dhamma that a knowledge of the Abhidhamma is essential to comprehend fully the Teachings of the Buddha, inasmuch as it presents the key that opens the door to reality.

The Abhidhamma Piṭaka is composed of the following seven works:

1. Dhammasaṅgaṇī (Classification of Dhammas)
2. Vibhanga (Divisions)
3. Dhātukathā (Discourse on Elements)

4. Puggalapaññatti (The Book on Individuals)
5. Kathāvatthu (Points of Controversy)
6. Yamaka (The Book of Pairs)
7. Paṭṭhāna (The Book of Causal Relations)

In the Dhammasaṅgaṇī, the *dhammas*, or factors of existence, are enumerated. The Dhammasaṅgaṇī opens with a *mātikā*, a "matrix," or schedule of categories, which classifies the totality of phenomena into a scheme of twenty-two triads (*tika*) — sets of three terms — and a hundred dyads (*duka*) — sets of two terms. The *mātikā* also includes a Suttanta matrix, a schedule of forty-two dyads taken from the suttas. The *mātikā* serves as a framework for the entire Abhidhamma, introducing the diverse perspectives from which all phenomena are to be classified. The main body of the Dhammasaṅgaṇī consists of four parts:

1. "States of Consciousness," which analyzes all states of consciousness into their constituent factors, each of which is elaborately defined;
2. "Matter," which enumerates and classifies the various types of material phenomena;
3. "The Summary," offering concise explanations of all the terms in the Abhidhamma and Suttanta matrixes;
4. "The Synopsis," offering more condensed explanations of the Abhidhamma matrix but not the Suttanta matrix.

The Vibhanga contains eighteen chapters, dealing in turn with the following aggregates: sense bases, elements, truths, faculties, dependent origination (*Paṭicca-samuppāda*), foundations of mindfulness, supreme efforts, means to accomplishment, factors of enlightenment, the Noble Eightfold Path, jhānas, illimitables (*Brahmavihāra*), training rules, analytical knowledge, kinds of knowledge, defilements, and "the heart of the doctrine," a concise overview of

the Buddhist universe.

The Dhātukathā discusses all phenomena with reference to the three schemata of aggregates, sense bases, and elements. It attempts to determine whether, and to what extent, they are included or not included in them and whether they are associated with them or disassociated with them.

The body of the Puggalapaññatti provides formal definitions of different types of individuals. It has ten chapters: the first deals with single types of individuals, the second with pairs, the third with groups of three, etc. The detailed typology elaborated in the Puggalapaññatti is heavily dependent upon the Sutta Piṭaka, especially the Anguttara Nikāya.

The Kathāvatthu contains a discussion of the points of controversy between the early Buddhist Schools and a defense of the Theravādin viewpoint. The Kathāvatthu is attributed to Venerable Moggaliputta Tissa, who presided over the Third Council, which was convened in Patna by the Emperor Asoka in the middle of the third century B.C.E.

The Yamaka has the purpose of resolving ambiguities and defining the precise usage of technical terms. It is called the “Book of Pairs” because it employs pairs of questions that approach the subject under investigation from opposing points of view. The Yamaka has ten chapters: roots, aggregates, sense bases, elements, truths, formations, latent dispositions, consciousness, phenomena, and faculties.

Causation and the mutual relationship of phenomena are examined in the Paṭṭhāna. The Paṭṭhāna contains an elaboration of a scheme of twenty-four conditional relations (*paccaya*) for plotting the causal connections between different types of phenomena. The body of this work applies these conditional relations to all the phenomena included in the Abhidhamma matrix. The book has four main sections: origination according to the positive method, origination according to the negative method, origination

according to the positive-negative method, and origination according to the negative-positive method. Each of these in turn has six subdivisions: origination of triads, of dyads, of dyads and triads combined, of triads and dyads combined, of triads and triads combined, and of dyads and dyads combined. Because of its great size as well as its philosophical importance, it is also known as *Mahāpakaraṇa*, “The Great Treatise.” ■

Purpose of the Charleston Buddhist Fellowship

The Charleston Buddhist Fellowship is an educational organization whose purpose is to preserve and promote the original teachings of the Buddha in the West.

The Charleston Buddhist Fellowship actively encourages an ever-deepening process of commitment among Westerners to live a Buddhist way of life in accordance with the original teachings of the Buddha.

The Charleston Buddhist Fellowship provides free educational material to those who want to learn about Buddhism and about how to put the teachings of the Buddha into practice.

The goals of the Charleston Buddhist Fellowship are:

1. To provide systematic instruction in the Dhamma, based primarily on Pali sources.
2. To promote practice of the Dhamma in daily life.
3. To provide guidance on matters relating to the Dhamma, its study, and its practice.
4. To encourage the study of the Pali language and literature.
5. To maintain close contact with individuals and groups interested in promoting and supporting the foregoing goals. ■



CHARLESTON BUDDHIST FELLOWSHIP
940 Rutledge Avenue ♦ Charleston, SC 29403

Charleston Buddhist Fellowship

Membership

The Charleston Buddhist Fellowship encourages sincere practitioners to become members and to become active in promoting and supporting the activities of the organization.

Members receive mailings and are given priority and discounts at teachings and events. Membership contributions help support the on-going activities of the organization and help cover operating expenses such as producing, printing, and mailing notices of events and special activities, mailbox fees, cost of preparing and producing teaching material, etc.

The membership fee is \$10.00 per person per month, if paid monthly, or \$100.00 per person per year, if paid annually. Checks should be made payable to “Charleston Buddhist Fellowship.”

Membership Form:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Home phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Return forms to: Charleston Buddhist Fellowship ♦ 940 Rutledge Avenue ♦ Charleston, SC 29403-3206